

“We commit to actions that deepen our relationships of communion, wherever we are... We co-create structures and practices that challenge, free, and unite us... We commit ourselves to further systemic change. We are educators in all that we are and do, exploring concrete avenues to eliminate root causes of injustice. We are present with people at the peripheries and collaborate to end all forms of discrimination, inequity, and violence.”

SSND, The Call of the 25th General Chapter, December 2023

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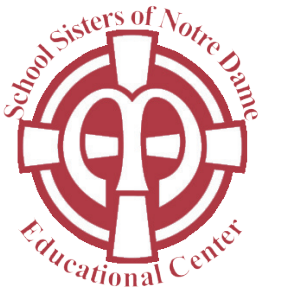
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SPRING/SUMMER 2025

Dear Friends,

Happy Summer! And congratulations to all our students who attended our Closing ceremony on June 4! We are all so proud of you!

We find inspiration in recent words from Pope Leo XIV: “Be brave in your mission, so that the educational work to which you dedicate yourselves may form wise minds and hearts capable of listening and feeling passion for humanity.” Two beautiful examples come to mind. One of our GED students, who, in her humility has asked to remain anonymous, obtained a full-time job at JFK airport in early May. She attended our Closing Ceremony to celebrate with her peers. At some point, she quietly slid me an envelope of cash. “This,” she said with tears in her eyes, “is my first paycheck. I always planned to do this, and I am so proud to be able to do it now. I will never EVER forget what all of you have done for me.” Unity.

The second example occurred toward the end of the school year. Many students from one of our ESOL classes gathered in the hallway after their class. They were loudly chatting and laughing. They did not want to leave! I gently reminded them there was another class going on. They smiled, apologized, and stepped outside the building without interrupting their conversation. From my office window, I could hear and even FEEL their joy in community—a community of women that did not exist 8 months before. I ran outside and asked them if I could capture their love for one another in a photo. Here they are! Unity.

I am deeply grateful to our staff, who bring their passion and expertise to the table every day; to our volunteers, who give so generously of their time and talents; to our partners, whose collaboration strengthens our collective



impact; and to our donors, whose belief in our mission fuels our progress. A special thank you to our board of directors, whose commitment to good governance and strategic planning ensure that our organization remains strong, accountable, and mission-centered.

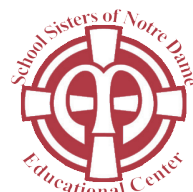
Please consider the many ways in which you can support and engage with our organization:

- Join our Circle of Friends, our monthly giving program (ssndecwomens.org)
- Contribute resources or expertise to our ministry
- Make a one-time donation.
- Stay connected through our digital platforms
- Create a legacy of empowerment. By including us in your planned giving, you help ensure that future generations of women have access to educational opportunities and career advancement.

Thank you for your continued belief in our work and for all that you do to help us advance God’s mission.

With warm regards and great anticipation for cooler weather,

Francine Poppo
Executive Director



SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME EDUCATIONAL CENTER

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SSND Educational Center

SHUFFLE INTO SPRING 2025



Shuffle into Spring 2025 was a tremendous success! This year, we celebrated two incredible women—Wendy Phaff Gennaro and Nancy Vargas—with our Spirit of Service award. Nancy and Wendy are not only generous supporters of our Center, but also true leaders of our Queens community, dedicating themselves to uplifting women and creating equal opportunity for all.

Nancy, a daughter of an Ecuadorian immigrant, is the owner of the JFK based chauffeured ground transportation provider DH2. She is also the immediate past president of the JFK Rotary Club, a board member of the Queens Centers for Progress, and a member of the NY Women's Chamber of Commerce. Wendy is the Director of Development at Queens Centers for Progress. The nonprofit supports and empowers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She also chairs the Health and Human Services Committee on Queens Community Board 8 and is a past Vice President of the JFK Rotary Club.

With 217 guests, our event attendance saw almost a 10% increase from last year. And our Circle of Friends monthly giving community grew by nearly 25% in one night!

Thank you to our development committee for working to pull off another successful Shuffle into Spring, and to our student speaker, Ola, for sharing her experience with the Center. We are all so proud and excited to have been able to dedicate a lovely evening at Russo's on the Bay to honoring Wendy and Nancy.



CENTER HAPPENINGS

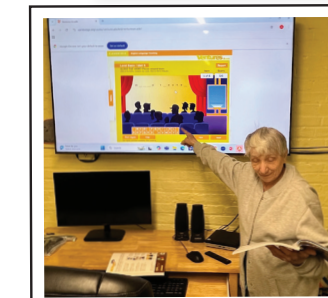


• **Closing Ceremony!** In June, we celebrated the women who completed the 2024-2025 school year at the Center. These women—enrolled in ESOL, GED, Citizenship Preparation, and Digital Literacy—have worked hard, mastered new skills, formed community, and had fun. We will welcome many of them back in the Fall!

• **Platinum Seal of Transparency:** We earned the highest level of achievement on Candid, a nonprofit information service that provides a database of foundations, grant research tools, and community outreach. Get updates on our impact through our Candid profile by scanning the QR code.



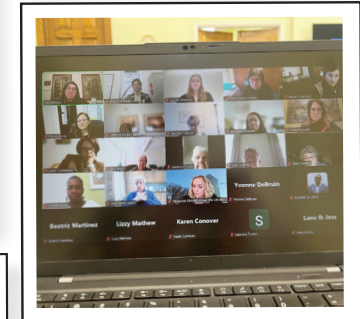
• **Enhancing Our Tech:** With money donated from our generous donors and grantors, we purchased 20 new laptops and 25 new headsets to enhance our classrooms. We will add Office 365 licenses on all laptops. Sister Bernadette also got a new SMART TV in order to incorporate online learning into her introductory ESOL classes!



• **New Class:** Our first ever Digital Literacy Class saw a total enrollment of 45 students across three sections. The women were eager to learn new technological skills!



• **UN Zoom Panel:** Executive Director Francine Poppo & student Ling Liu participated as one of six presenting organizations in the NGO CSW Forum 69 on community-led projects that work toward ending gender-based violence and empowering women worldwide.



• **Tapestry Making:** Anna Rocchio from the Ladies of Charity at St. John's University led a class where students designed lovely quilt squares that were sewn together to form a spring-themed tapestry. It was hung and auctioned at our Shuffle into Spring fundraiser!



This month, we say goodbye to our dear friend, Sister Pat Ferrick, SSND. Sister Pat was a beautiful soul, inside and out. She served God for 60+ years as a School Sister of Notre Dame, devoting over 30 years of her life to service in South America, particularly in Chile and Paraguay. Sister Pat lived at our Center for five years and often worked as a volunteer. She translated documents for our students and accompanied many students to immigration court. She carried a warm smile, a happy mood, and a humorous quip everywhere she went! Sister Pat, pray for us as you go for walks with God!

